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FACTIONS IN THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT

1. The Iranian Government is basically split into three factions. There is a conservative faction, a radical faction, and a faction ideologically between the two that is usually referred to as the moderate faction but is more properly described as "a middle-of-the-road" faction. All of these factions advocate an Islamic government, although there are striking differences in their ideas on how an Islamic government should be structured.

a. Radical faction. This faction calls for an Islamic government with a foreign policy more aligned with the Eastern Bloc. It wants the government to exercise complete control of an economy organized essentially along classical Marxist lines. Many members of this faction were educated in the Soviet Bloc, including some clergymen. They also were involved in the more radical anti-Shah movements prior to the revolution. Many of them spent time in jail during the Shah's reign and in many cases their cellmates were members of the Tudeh Party, Iran's Communist party.

b. Conservative faction. This faction believes that the government should be based exclusively on religious precepts. This would include a total return to Shariah law. With regard to the economy, adherents of this faction want a free economy, in part because this is the way they interpret the Koran and the Hadith of the prophet, but perhaps most importantly because this faction contains the majority of the Bazaaris from which the faction gets its financial support and they are vocal adherents of a free economy. In foreign policy, this faction advocates closer relations with the West with one exception, the United States. They are opposed to Israel and also opposed to normalization of relations with the United States as long as the United States is closely allied to Israel.

c. Middle-of-the-road faction. This faction is usually referred to as the moderate faction. It takes a more pragmatic approach to problems facing the government than either of the other two ideologically rigid factions. While members of this faction favor an Islamic government, they advocate a form of a republic in which the clergy shares authority with secular elements but in which ultimate governmental authority is kept in clerical hands. This faction advocates a free economy with some government participation. On foreign policy they want to expand relations with the West and are the only faction which would like to see a resumption of relations with the United States.

2. The three factions interact in curious ways. For instance, the conservative faction cooperates with the middle-of-the-road faction in its moves against the radical faction. But the middle-of-the-road faction tends to oppose the conservative faction on the war because the latter wants to bring it to an end. In Iran ideologies are not of overriding importance except for religious devotion. Iranians tend to follow strong leadership

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rather than ideologies, so there is often a shifting of ideological commitment. When examining Iranian politics, it is more beneficial to look for strong leadership than to attempt to categorize the leaders ideologically. A good example is Mohammad Mossadegh. He made the National Front work through his charisma and strong personality. Once he was removed from the scene, the National Front was never again a significant force, not because it lacked ideological appeal, but because it lacked leadership.

3. The following is an attempt to identify key Iranian leaders within the various factions. It is important to note that all three factions pander to Ayatollah Khomeini on issues where his stand is clear. Some of these will be pointed out below.

a. Conservative faction. President and Defense Minister Khamenei is the spokesman for this faction.

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The other significant cabinet member who is a member of the conservative faction is Foreign Minister Velayati. There is a group of about 15 members in the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) headed by Ayatollah Azeri-Qumi who are very conservative and press the conservative view in the Majlis. The Hojatieh Society is a conservative clerical society which has many members in government positions; these individuals normally support the conservative faction. Because of its very conservative views, this group does not have much in the way of appeal among educated Iranians. Of the three factions, this is the weakest, although it can use its extensive support among the clergy to rally support for conservative causes.

b. Radical faction. There are two cabinet members who are dedicated radicals with Marxist leanings. They are Prime Minister Musavi-Khamene'i and Minister of Heavy Industries Nabavi. The Minister of the Revolutionary Guard, Rafiqdust is a radical, but he has little power. A more powerful man is the Revolutionary Prosecutor, Ayatollah Khoiniha.

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The real strength of the radical faction lies in its virtual total control of the media. Radical members are adamantly opposed to any resumption of relations with the United States. Their perception is that Khomeini himself is opposed to any resumption in relations, a factor that leads them to assume that this is a subject they can freely attack in the media. Their strength is in their superior organization; their weakness lies in the fact that both of the other factions oppose them and they have limited popular appeal in Iran.

c. Middle-of-the-road faction. This faction consists of personalities who look to Speaker of the Majlis Hashemi-Rafsenjani for leadership. He is a skillful politician who does very well at playing off the other two factions against each other. He has strong political allies in Minister of Information Reyshari and Minister of Interior Muhtashamipur who, despite his leftist credentials, is a close friend and political ally of

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Rafsenjani. The Commander of the Revolutionary Guards, Muhsen Reza'i, is also
a close ally of Raiseniani's.

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